Differences between Chinese and American Culture

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Keywords: Culture, Chinese, American.

Abstract. Global-sized communication has created a world in which we increasingly interact with people from different cultures. With the expectation of enhancing the cultural exchange between China and the US, people know that every country has its own cultural spirit, this paper mainly talk about the differences between China and the United States, I only list a few aspects to show the differences, and every aspect is not in-depth discussion.

Introduction

Iceberg theory is a sentence of family therapy, however, it is also fit for many other theories, just like the culture, we assume that culture is an iceberg, only some of the culture is visible, and most of it is below the surface of our awareness. It is not easily observable. When we only learn visible culture, we are missing the bigger part that is below the seabed out of our awareness. We will talk about the culture below the surface here.

China and the US are big countries around the world, they rely on each other from strength to strength. The interpersonal communication growing frequency of the two countries has pushed people to pay more attention to the ways of communication, however, because of the different culture backgrounds, people must confront culture conflict.

With the goal of promoting cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two countries, today I mainly talk about the culture in five parts. And the final part is about my conclusion to this paper.

Etiquette

Different cultural backgrounds have different value orientation and different lifestyle; both of them are reflect different means of language expression, including body language, behavior language and the language itself. For example, shaking hands is a basic ceremony in China, however, in the United States, they may smile or say hi instead of shaking hands, if must be, it surely has certain etiquette. If the woman reaches out to shake hands first, then they can shake, and if the woman does not, the man only can nod in greeting. “Lady first” is a basic ceremony in western countries, so does the United States.

China follows the western ceremony in which “lady first”, and if a man does like this, people in China call him “gentleman”. That is the cultural shock and fusion. And people in China now shake hands when the two people meet for the first time. That is the same with Americans now. From the two examples, people know that cultures are not changeless, they all depend on what the people do, and how they keep it to a culture and incorporated into their countries.

Relationship

Family Relationship

Interpersonal relationship is equal in America; children can call their parents’ name instead of dad or mom. And parents usually treat their children as their friends. That is a difficult thing in China. Therefore, they speak to their children by the tone of discussing, they seldom order their children that what the children should do and what the children cannot do. What’s more, beating children is forbidden with the law in America, if the parents does, children can take their parents to
court, this is so-called the conception of equality. When the children grow up, they can choose what they want, and parents seldom meddle in the development of their children, children also do not enjoy parents’ money or help. That’s why most of the Americans are independent.

In Chinese families, older members’ opinions are respected, and the youngest members are loved and taken good care of by all. For thousands of years, people have always considered it a social responsibility and behavioral norm to respect aged and care for the young. People regard filial piety as a moral in China; they listen to their parents for granted. They express love and genuine by this way. Filial piety has long been a tenet of traditional Chinese culture and is a core concept of Confucianism. Historically speaking, our ancestors also placed great emphasis on filial piety.

Difference between the two countries leads to the different attitude to their elders and the youth.

Individualism and Collectivism

The centralization in thoughts have been obvious characteristics in Chinese traditional culture, it usually show people Chinese collectivism while the culture in the United States is pluralism which usually reflect the individualism.

The collectivism is common in China, no matter in family, school, company, even in the society. When the children start to go to school, they are instilled such an idea that the class is a collectivity, and if the class gets good grades, the students should be proud of it, then, if the class behaves bad, students who are in this class should be shameful. Those is just like patriotism, take the basketball competition for instance, if Chinese team win the competition, Chinese who are not the members of the team are crazy just like it is he/she wins the competition. Collectivism is keen on the group—whether to a country, a province, a school, a class, a family, a team and so on.

The individualism is an important culture in America, the most obvious is that they eat together and pay for him/her, which is so-called Dutch treatment. To be honest, many people in China begin to learn from Americans, sometimes they only pay for themselves, but most of them are students who cannot support themselves. Back to Americans, they prefer individualism, they are out of their parents and leave home when they become adults, and they do not want to rely on other people even though their parents, Americans do not understand Chinese people who rely on their parents until they get married, maybe until their parents died.

The collectivism and individualism are significant aspects to know the different culture between China and the United States. No matter you like individualism or collectivism, the most important thing is to understand and respect the culture of the two countries.

Friendship

People in America may find the atmosphere: Americans seldom have true friends, I mean the friends that can enter their private life, take part in their life, and comment life for several decades, even forever. Americans usually divide friends in many parts, working friends, playing friends, classmates, drinking friends and so on. They are just like warm water which can not be cold or hot. Lending money from friends is impossible on Americans’ mind; they deem that friends cannot be relating to money. They mind people asking them about their age, salary, marriage and so on. People who come to their family without inviting is not welcomed even the people are their good friends.

In China, most of the Chinese people have their best friend, and maybe have several good friends. They know everything about their friends, including the salary; they treat their friends as relatives. They are willing to refer any help to their friends, different from Americans; they think it is common to lend money to their friends. Good friendship in China is just like lovers especially girls, they do everything together, and many foreigners who do not know may think they are lesbians. Foreigners do not understand why so close, how Chinese could people so enthusiastic to their guests, and why they are willing to pay for the meal when they go out for dinner.

Due to the different cultures, friendships present different shapes.
Values

Values are not only dominating people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, but reflect people's cognition on the way to do things. Chinese people affected deeply by traditional thought, due to different cultural backgrounds, Chinese and American people have different values.

What are your limitations on spending? Most of Chinese people may answer that you should be conservative at all times with your money in every aspect but eating. Most of the Chinese people enjoy the feeling of eating well, which is the greatest happiness in traditional thoughts. However, Americans often plan the budget close to the limitation, they tend to consume over the budget. Different from Chinese, Americans are willing to spend money on houses, cars and other life products rather than eating. They prefer to enjoy high-quality of life, such as go camping, climbing.

Chinese people enjoy treat others as a common thing, maybe the others are friends, colleagues or leaders, but Americans do not like it. Culinary culture is ancient civilizations, it has inherited thousands of years, almost every Chinese people find fun in it. However, what Americans cannot bear is that most of Chinese are loud and pushy in the restaurants. The Xing Jiuling, Finger Guessing Game and other drinking etiquette are created to make people drink more alcohol and have fun. However, they are not acceptable in the United States, Americans respect others’ peace, and they cannot stand the noise atmosphere.

Another is competition, competition is a lifestyle in the United States, and they believe the old saying “the survival of the fittest”. Competition has become a kind of values and affects the life of Americans in various aspects. Besides, the competitive activities have permeated economy area, political life, competition between countries, and even in people’s daily life. Americans emphasize fair competition and competitive efficiency; that is the rule Americans must keep.

Religion

Religion is not only indispensable, but promotes the development of the United States. A large number of Americans believe in religions, so the religion is getting more and more active. It creates deep influence to the social life of Americans. According to research, there are more than two hundred million citizens in America, Christians take the possession of more than eighty-eight percent, ninety-five percent of them put their faith in god, fifty-eight percent of them pray one time symbolically every day. That is to say, there are nine people say that they believe in God in every ten, eight persons think that religion is very important to their life, seven persons are belong to some religion organization, and more than half of them deem that God is the strong guiding power of democracy in the United States. From the American point of view, God is the key element of American Civilization. The US dollars write the sentence “We believe in God”. You cannot image how crazy Americans to religions. In US, you can see the people go to the church on weekends are much more than the people who go to the competition of sports. They spend much time on religions.

In China, churches are rear, a lot of Chinese people do not have any religion, people from other countries think it is amazing that some Chinese people do not have any religion. However, there are also some people belong to some religion, Buddhist are the most, there are many temples in China. Buddhism has been introduced into China for thousands of years, it started in India, and it is liked by Chinese people. Taoism is also a religion which Chinese people believe. Besides, there are some people believe in Christian, Mohammedanism, Catholicism, and other religions. Therefore, Chinese people are different from Americans, they are not so crazy about god, or spend much time on the religions.

Education

China and America are two of the countries that do a great job on educating. Many Chinese people study in America universities may find that western education thoughts differ a lot from Chinese traditional education. Students in America pay more attention to team work which make them know how to corporate with others, and the final grades is relate to your team work, every
member in this team gets the same score. In order to cultivate the students’ creativity, professors do not even limit their freedom in class, students can sit there and argue to the point that they do not agree with. However, that is break discipline in China, teachers may stop the behavior and call the students to his office to have a deep talk after class in high school. Professors in America like their students to speak and think, the most important is they respect every student, no matter what the score he or she got. Students cannot get such a treatment in China.

In China, generally speaking, how the teachers treat students usually depend on the students’ grades. In most instances, the better score you got, the better kindness you can got from your teacher, this is not individual phenomenon in China, that is common. Chinese students are good at memorizing, they are rigid and out of imagination, that is the failure in Chinese education.

Conclusion

Under the influence of the different cultures between the two countries, there exist completely different ways of language expressing. In the globalized world today, but without the ability to pick out differences, it would have the unnecessary misunderstanding. Historical context, future development is the two reasons of the culture conflict between the two countries. Under the crash of new theory and the old, there are more inevitable impacts between them. One represents thick culture meaning, and the other represents unlimited reverie, different life but the same splendid. So when the difference people cannot avoid, the more people need is not change, it is comprehensive.

References


